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AN ESSAY ON THE EXISTENCE of GOD, AND THE Immortality of the SOUL.

WHEREIN

These two important Points are aſcertained by clear and natural Arguments,

AND THE

Error of thoſe that abandon themſelves over to the Conduct of Chance is refuted;

WITH

Evident Proofs of the Neceſſity Mankind are under to forſake this wild and dangerous Conduct, as the only Means to ſecure their eternal Happineſs.

By *PHILANTHROPOS*

Learn to live well, that thou mayſt die ſo too:
To live and die is all we have to do. DENHAM.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

EXISTENCE of GOD,

AND THE

Immortality of the SOUL.

WHereas Atheiſts and other wicked people reject all proofs that are founded upon the Authority of holy writ, the foundations of which they think to ſap, by impiouſly denying the Exiſtence of God, and the Immortality of the ſoul, I thought it my duty as a defender of religion, to aſcertain both theſe important points, by arguments deduced from natural reaſon. I muſt confeſs indeed, that they are not ſo proper to make impreſſion upon obdurate minds, and to lead to the true religion thoſe that have the misfortune not to know it,

as proofs that are drawn from the miracles and prophefies that authorife the certainty of the ſcriptures: but as they are ſolid, more obvious to ſenſe, more conformable to reaſon, more proportioned to moſt capacities, and of ſuch a nature that one cannot withſtand their evidence, I hope they will anſwer the end I propoſe in them, and prove uſeful to mankind.

Whatever efforts Atheiſts make to efface the general impreſſion of a Deity, which the view of this great world naturally creates in the mind of man, they can neither deſtroy, nor entirely blot it out, ſo deeply it is ingrafted. If it is not an invincible argument, it is a ſentiment and a view, in ſome ſort, of equal weight with argument. We need not force our aſſent to it, yet we cannot contradict it without violence. Reaſon has nothing to do, but to follow its natural bent, to be convinced that there is but one God, the creator of all things that we ſee, when it conſiders the regular motions of thoſe great bodies that revolve over our heads; that beautiful order of nature which never errs, the admirable connection of all its parts that ſupport one another, and which cannot ſubſiſt together but by the mutual aſſiſtance they lend each other; that diverſity of ſtones, metals, plants; that wonderful ſtructure of animate bodies; their production, their birth, their increaſe, their diſſolution. It is impoſſible that the mind, contemplating all theſe wonders, ſhould not hear this ſecret

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voice, that all this is not the effect of chance, but of ſome cauſe that poſſeſſes, in itſelf, all the perfections which we obſerve diffuſed through this great work. In vain one would attempt to explicate the receſſes of this aſtoniſhing machine by ſaying, there is nothing in all this but a matter vaſt in its extent, and a great motion that diſpoſes it and keeps it in order: for the cauſe of this matter, and of this great motion muſt be aſſigned; which can never reaſonably be done, but by aſcending to an eternal and intelligent principle that has produced and conſerves both. For by what means can we conceive this ſluggiſh and inſenſible maſs that we call *matter*, to be an eternal being without any beginning? Do we not clearly ſee that it has no cauſe in itſelf of its exiſtence, and that it is ridiculous to attribute to the vileſt and moſt contemptible of all beings the greateſt of all perfections, which is to exiſt of itſelf? I am ſenſible, I am infinitely more noble than this matter; I comprehend it entirely, but it can neither ſee, feel, hear, nor underſtand me; and yet, at the ſame time, I find that I am not eternal: therefore it muſt have a cauſe of its exiſtence as well as myſelf, and as this cauſe cannot be matter, it muſt be that eternal and all powerful principle we ſeek after.

But, if it is ridiculous to imagine matter ſubſiſting of itſelf from all eternity without any cauſe or beginning, pray, how much

more is it ſo, to ſuppoſe an eternal motion? For it is evident that no matter contains within itſelf the principle of its own motion. It may receive motion from without, but it can never move itſelf: all the motion it has is always communicated to it by ſome other cauſe; and when that cauſe ceaſes to give motion, matter, as to itſelf, remains in eternal reſt. Who then has produced this great motion that we ſee in all the parts of the world, if it does not derive its origin from matter, and is not united to it by any conſtant and fix'd attachment, but paſſes from one part to another by a continual change? Muſt we likewiſe conſtitute this accident an eternal being ſubſiſting of itſelf? Or rather, muſt we not acknowledge, that, as it does not ſubſiſt without a cauſe, and this cauſe is not matter, it muſt be ſome ſpiritual principle? But, if this principle is neceſſary to produce this motion, it is no leſs ſo to regulate and determine it to a proper proportion to conſerve the world, without which it would rather deſtroy it. For though one may very well imagine that this motion which forms, keeps in order, and diſſolves all bodies, is infinite in infinite ſpace, nevertheleſs it is certain it is finite in every part of it; and that, if it was either greater or leſs in this viſible world, it would change the whole face of it, and entirely overthrow it. Who then has limited it to this exact proportion? And how in the infinite degrees of

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which it is ſuſceptible, is it found preciſely in that which has produced this admirable order? Matter of itſelf is indifferent to receive a greater or leſſer motion; either would diſſolve the world, or utterly change it. Whence comes it to be in ſo exact equilibrium? You will ſay perhaps, by chance; you may ſay ſo indeed; but I am poſitive you cannot ſay it ſeriouſly.

But beſides matter and motion, we find likewiſe in the world thinking beings, becauſe we ourſelves are ſure we think, and we judge the ſame of other men; and the conſideration of theſe beings leads us likewiſe more directly to the knowledge of the immortality of our ſouls, and thence to the exiſtence of their Creator. For it is impoſſible we ſhould contemplate the nature of matter, but we muſt acknowledge, that, in whatever manner we diſpoſe the different parts of it, we can never make of this dead, inſenſible maſs, a living, thinking and intelligent being. Our reaſon ſees few things with greater clearneſs than the impoſſibility of a thinking and ſelf-conſcious matter. What follows from thence? Why, that as it is certain that we think, and are thinking beings, we have, within us, a being that is not matter, and which is really diſtinct from it. Who then ſhould be capable of deſtroying this conſcious being? Why ſhould it periſh when ſeparated from the body? The annihilation of a being, with reſpect to us, is inconceivable; we have no example of it in nature; all our reaſon oppoſes

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it. Why then ſhould we conſtrain not only our imagination, but our reaſon to degrade theſe thinking beings from the condition of all other beings, which having once exiſted, never return again into nothing? And why ſhould we dread for our ſouls, infinitely more noble than our bodies, annihilation, a thing that we are not at all afraid will happen to any body whatever? But, if we cannot doubt that there are, in the world, thinking beings that are not bodies, and are ſure theſe beings are not eternal, from what principle muſt they derive their origin? It cannot be from matter, for matter not being a ſpirit, how can it produce a ſpirit? Nor is it any other ſimilar ſpirit, that is to ſay, it is not the ſoul of the father that produces that of the child. For how could a ſpirit draw out of nothing another ſpirit that has thoughts, a will, and deſires, different from its own, and often quite contrary? If the ſpirit produce a ſpirit, it would produce it in thinking; it would be conſcious of this force; it would perceive this effect; yet who ever perceived it? I cannot tell how you came into my womb, ſaid the Mother of the *Machabees* to her children. All mothers may truly ſay the ſame; and it is evident that their thoughts and wills contribute nothing to this admirable work that is formed within them; for they often have thoughts and wills contrary to child-bearing.

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Therefore all things in the world lead us to the knowledge of the Creator of it, matter, motion, and ſpirit. All theſe things cry out with a loud voice, that they did not make themſelves, and that it was God that made them. He made us, we made not ourſelves. To keep us from this wild and impious imagination, that the world is eternal, he has even thought fit to leave in it ſuch ſenſible and evident characters, that ſhew it, at leaſt, to have a beginning in the order in which we ſee it; and, without which, neither man, nor any other animal, could ſubſiſt. Whence it follows, that men and animals have had a beginning; and this is ſufficient to prove the exiſtence of God. We ſee no natural cauſe that can produce high mountains, and ſink valleys, capable of containing the waters of the ſea. Should we turn over all hiſtories, we ſhall find no where an inſtance of a new mountain appearing in the world. Sometimes the wind heaps up little hills of ſand here and there, but it never raiſes them to any conſiderable height; and even when it has formed them, it often deſtroys them again. Earthquakes occaſion great and terrible devaſtations; but we read no where, that they have ever produced high mountains, a thing we cannot ſuppoſe without adopting an airy hypotheſis, which is entirely contradicted by experience. By the ſenſible decreaſe that daily happens of the mountains that are in the world, occaſioned by

rains and floods, which carry off, with them, ſome particles of the earth; and by the valleys, on the contrary, filling up, it is evident, that they cannot laſt for ever in this ſtate; but that in the ſpace of a certain number of years, the mountains would become level, and the vallies full. Conſequently, it is manifeſt, that if the world had been eternal, thoſe mountains would have been levelled long ago, the leaſt ſenſible decreaſe therein being capable of reducing, by infinite degrees, the higheſt mountains in the infinite duration of eternity. It is evident, therefore, that we cannot ſuppoſe that the world is eternal in its preſent ſtate; that is to ſay, in a ſtate in which one part of the earth is dry and high, the other low and covered with water. The common courſe of natural cauſes tends to alter this ſtate, by covering the whole earth with water, and yet men could not ſubſiſt in any other. Without doubt, they would be entirely deſtroyed, if the earth were quite covered over with water. Therefore they are no more eternal than animals; they had a beginning, and they may even trace, by a certain number of years, their origin.

But whence is derived the origin and cauſe of man's exiſtence? If we ſeek it in nature, we ſhall find no cauſe capable of producing ſuch an effect. We have never heard that men were otherwiſe produced than by the natural way. It is certain, that the ordinary mo-

motion of the matter of this world, would never produce a lion, if there were none of that ſpecies already upon the earth; as we ſee that this motion has not produced wolves in *England*, ſince they were baniſhed thence. At leaſt it can never produce a ſpirit, which we have clearly proved, as well as that matter being devoid of thought, can never have a ſelf-conſciouſneſs, whatever diſpoſitions one may give to it. Therefore we muſt neceſſarily acknowledge, that both men have had a beginning, and that all nature being incapable of producing man, it follows, that, as man is not eternal, he could not be produced but by a Being more powerful than nature. Beſides, all the inventions of men prove this beginning, and deny eternity to man. We ſee nothing in the world, that marks a greater antiquity, than what the Holy Scripture attributes to it. There were no hiſtorians before four thouſand years; ſince which time there has been a perpetual progreſs in the world, like that of a man that comes out of his infancy, and paſſes through the ſeveral ſtages of life. *Varro* ſays of the arts that were in the world, at the time he wrote, none was more ancient than a thouſand years. A progreſs has always been made in diſcovering new means to relieve the neceſſities of mankind; and in proportion, as we aſcend higher, we always find, that the inventions of men were more imperfect, and men more unprovided. We know the origin of almoſt all the

arts, all the ſciences, all civil governments, all empires, all cities. I know that a certain author has crowded, among the new inventions of ſome ages paſt, ſeveral ancient ones that are loſt, of which he has compoſed a book, under this title: *Vetera deperdita, Nova reperdita.* But one may obſerve, in the ſame book, that the ancient inventions were of no great uſe, and that they were advantageouſly recompenſed by the new ones, which are more excellent and more eaſy. Whereas thoſe that were diſcovered not many years ago, are ſo commodious on the one hand, that it is impoſſible ever to deſtroy them, when once known; and ſo eaſy on the other, that it is ſurpriſing they lay ſo long undiſcovered. For inſtance, what is more uſeful to the life of man, than the art of rendering ſubſervient to his purpoſes, thoſe two great agents of nature, wind and water? Hardly any thing is done, in theſe days, but by means of the forces borrowed from theſe two bodies. The leaſt knowledge of mechanicks ſeems to lead us naturally to draw from thence the uſes they may ſerve for; generally we only ſeek the forces, and their application is never difficult. One may confidently affirm, that men would never be ſo fooliſh as to do with their own ſtrength what they can do with ſo much more eaſe by means of wind and water, and that therefore the invention of mills will never be loſt: yet this invention; that is ſo uſeful, is not ſo very ancient,

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for we find no account of it before *Pliny*'s time. They had no other way of grinding corn, than by turning a mill by the force of their arms, or by animals; and though it appears, from this author, that, in his time, there were ſome mills that turned by water, nevertheleſs, the manner in which he ſpeaks of them in his 18th book, chap. 10. ſhews that this invention was not brought to any perfection, and was not commonly known: for he mentions it as the moſt uncommon method of grinding corn; whereas, now that it is well known, it excells all others.

Nothing is more natural and more ſimple than printing; and there is no room to imagine that this art, which eternalizes at it were every thing elſe, will ever be aboliſhed; but there is great reaſon to be ſurprized how we came to be ſo long without finding it out. The antients engraved upon copper; therefore it was eaſy to imagine that by printing upon paper what they had thus engraved, they might, in a moment, obtain what they had ſpent ſo much time in tracing with the graver. Had they been ſtruck with this idea, and followed it, they would not have been a long time in perfecting it, nor without finding the mixture of ink neceſſary for printing; and yet it is not above three hundred years ſince they firſt thought of this invention, which would laſt for ever, if the world were of an eternal duration.

What may we not ſay of gun-powder? What advantages do not ariſe from it with reſpect to hunting and war? How much properer is a gun to kill a bird than the bows and croſs-bows of antient times? From how many troubleſome machines, of little efficacy, are we delivered by our cannon and our mines? They had ſcarce any other means formerly of taking great cities fortified with ſtrong walls, but by raiſing mounts of earth to fight hand to hand. The moſt inconſiderable places ſtopped a victorious army ſix months; and *Cæſar* and *Alexander*, with all their valour, would not have taken in a twelve month one of the ſtrong towns in the low-countries. Men are too wicked ever to forget an invention that ſeconds ſo well their paſſions. The matter of it was always expoſed to their view; the preparation is not very difficult; the experiment was eaſy: yet it has not been a great while in the world.

The compaſs is of ſuch ſurpriſing uſe, that it has diſcovered to us a new world, and by means thereof, all the inhabitants of the earth are joined in commerce. It is ſo ſimple, that it gives room to admire how men could be ſo long without finding it out; for the property which the load-ſtone has to attract iron being always known and experienced, it is hard to comprehend how it happened, that man, whether by chance or on purpoſe, never left at liberty a needle touched with a load-ſtone, by ma-

making it ſwim upon water, or by ſuſpending it freely: for in either of theſe caſes he would have eaſily diſcovered that it always turned to the ſame point. The ſame thing would have happened, if he had ſuſpended a load-ſtone by a ſtring; for he would have immediately found, that it always turned one end to one pole, and the other to the other pole.

All theſe inventions and ſeveral more are ſo eaſy, that it is impoſſible the world could have exiſted from all eternity without diſcovering them ſooner; and they are ſo uſeful, that it is likewiſe impoſſible, that, if they had been once diſcovered, they could have ever been loſt. Therefore it is evident, as they are of a late date, they are ſenſible proofs of the origin of mankind, who could not but have found them out ſooner had they always exiſted, and they could not have forgotten them, if they had ever been known to them.

Therefore all that we ſee in this great world induces us to believe, that it did not always exiſt, and that there is a Being above the world who has created all other beings in it. *Atheiſts* reproach us in vain that this Being is incomprehenſible, and that we admit what we cannot conceive; for as he is infinite it is no wonder that he ſurpaſſes the ſhallow capacity of our finite and limited underſtanding. Our reaſon can penetrate ſo far as to comprehend that things exiſt, though the manner of their exiſtence is impenetrable. But this ſole incom-

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prehenſible Being, if once admitted, makes in ſome ſort all nature comprehenſible; and it is no longer difficult to account for a great many things which otherwiſe are inexplicable. Matter exiſts, becauſe God created it. Motion exiſts, becauſe God cauſes it, and conſerves it. This body is in this place, becauſe God having created it in a certain place, it came to this place through a ſeries of changes that is not infinite. There are thinking beings, becauſe God creates them, when he ſees bodies prepared for their reception. Mountains are not levelled, becauſe the world has not laſted long enough to produce this effect. There are men, becauſe they are born of a man and a woman, whom God created at firſt. There are animals, becauſe God in creating the world formed ſome of theſe animate machines, and gave them the means of multiplying and conſerving their ſpecies by the way of generation. There is no hiſtory more antient than four thouſand years; becauſe the world having begun but about ſix thouſand years ago: it is not at all ſtrange that men applied themſelves at firſt only to ſuch arts as were moſt uſeful for the conſervation of their lives. All this likewiſe exactly tallies with what the ſcripture teaches us concerning the Deity, and concerning the creation of the world.

Thus we ſee that thoſe who would reduce all things to the narrow limits of their underſtanding, and refuſe to admit this incompre-

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henſible Being, becauſe they do not comprehend him, nevertheleſs do not avoid the inconvenience they reproach to us without any manner of reaſon; but on the contrary only encreaſe it. Inſtead of an incomprehenſible Being whom they reject, the world, with all its parts, to them becomes incomprehenſible. They are obliged to admit a progreſſion in every thing, and an infinite ſucceſſion of cauſes dependent one upon the other, without ever arriving at a firſt and independent cauſe, which of all things in the world is moſt incomprehenſible, and moſt contrary to reaſon. Why is this man in the world? It is becauſe he was born of ſuch a father, and this father of another, and ſo *in infinitum.* Why is this lion upon the earth? Becauſe he is born of another lion, and ſo *in infinitum.* Why does this part of matter occupy ſuch a place? Becauſe it was removed to it from another place, and ſo *in infinitum.* There is infinity every where and conſequently incomprehenſibility. And thus their underſtanding muſt ſubmit to a weak and groundleſs evaſion, by reſiſting him to whoſe dominion it is both juſt and glorious to be ſubject. But I think I have now ſaid enough to convince any reaſonable perſon of theſe two great truths, that there is a God, and that the ſoul is immortal. And indeed after what has been ſaid, no body can, nor muſt deny them without being cenſured of a brutal ſtupidity. But as it will avail us nothing

thing at all to believe the exiſtence of a Deity, and the immortality of the ſoul, that moſt eminent prerogative with which we are ſpecially bleſſed above all other beings of this material world, if neglecting the principal end of our creation, we ſuffer ourſelves to be led by chance, and abandon ourſelves over to the rules of fancy; which nevertheleſs is that dreadful rock whereon the greateſt part of mankind are ſhipwreck'd, without hardly ever perceiving it till it is quite, or at leaſt almoſt too late; therefore we muſt proceed, and ſay ſomething more to prove the error of this conduct, and to ſhew the neceſſity we are under of leaving it betimes, and of living becoming the dignity of rational beings.

No ſooner are mankind arrived at an age to diſtinguiſh what they are, but they immediately chuſe for themſelves ſome profeſſion of life or other, according as neceſſity or their own inclination leads them. The cauſes of their inclinations are very different, and too often grounded upon little or no reaſon; and this is what makes that ſtrange and mean medley of profeſſions that we ſee in the world for that which attaches us rather to one kind of life than to another, is, for the moſt part, ſuch a trifle, that we ſhould be confounded and aſhamed of our levity, were we but rightly to conſider it.

But beſides theſe various profeſſions, each of which is practiſed only by a certain number

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of people, there is a common profeſſion, a general calling, that all mankind are obliged to embrace, which is that of being men, and of living as ſuch. This profeſſion is infinitely more noble than all others, it comprehends them all, it regulates them all: for the reſt are good or bad, uſeful or pernicious, in proportion as they are conformable, or contrary to this common ſtate. One may ſay in general, that all the duties of man conſiſt in living and dying as we ought to do. To live, is to walk towards death: to die, is to enter into eternal life. Life, therefore, is a journey towards death, and death, on the contrary, is the entrance into a new and perpetual life. But this entrance is double, and there is one of the gates of death that opens to us a ſtate of eternal happineſs, and the other lets us into a ſtate of eternal miſery; therefore it is evident that to live well, is to walk in a way that leads us to that happineſs which will never have an end, and that to live ill is to walk in a way that leads to an eternity of miſeries. All the other differences that we are capable of remarking in the multiplicity of the other ways that men follow, during their tranſitory life, are nothing in compariſon of the frightful difference that ariſes from the end of theſe ways. Every way that terminates in an eternity of miſery is miſerable, though it were covered with the ſweeteſt flowers. Every way that ends in eternal happineſs, is happy, tho'

the pointed thorn and pricking bramble entwine and gall our wary ſteps. But, to ſpeak the truth, it is not the difficulty that occurs, in the ways of mankind, that conſtitutes their difference; there is both pleaſure and pain in all the ways of life, and men would be hardly put to it which of them to chuſe, if they were only to conſider the eaſe and pleaſure they afford: but they ſcarce conſider any thing elſe, and yet there is no kind of life, though never ſo difficult, but what is chearfully embraced by ſome body or other, as moſt agreeable of all others, and, indeed, in this reſpect, mankind are not moſt unreaſonable. All things, in the world, reduce themſelves to a kind of equilibrium, and the good and bad of the different conditions of life counterbalance each other; ſo that one will find almoſt an equal proportion thereof in them all. The error, therefore, of mankind chiefly conſiſts in this, that they imagine their own condition more unhappy than that of other men, or, on the contrary, that of other men more happy than their own; whereas, in effect, all conditions are almoſt equally happy or unhappy. But this is not a place to extend this point, nor to ſhew in what manner cuſtom, imagination, paſſion, make this equality of happineſs and unhappyneſs in all ſorts of conditions. Whatever force all theſe things may have to make us loſe the ſentiment of unhappineſs and the taſte of happineſs, nothing can deſtroy the inequality that

is drawn from the end of theſe ways; and as this inequality is ſo dreadful, it is evident, that, if mankind were reaſonable they would have nothing elſe in view, and would only be ſolicitous to find out the way that leads us to eternal happineſs, and to avoid that which brings us to eternal miſery.

The chief concern of thoſe that travel is, to inform themſelves concerning the way that leads them to the place where they deſign to go; and we find nobody ſo imprudent as to make a diligent inquiry, whether they ſhall meet with a coach, a boat, and good company, without troubling themſelves, in the leaſt, concerning the place where this coach, this boat, and good company are to conduct them. Yet this imprudence, which is never committed in particular journies that are made from place to place, is but too frequent among men in the general journey of their whole life. Let them be never ſo loth, they all walk towards death; the law of nature urges them forwards, and does not permit them to ſtop in this journey. They know the double end that terminates this life, and all nations, almoſt acknowledge themſelves to be convinced of it; and yet the conſideration of theſe two ends, the one ſo dreadful, the other ſo deſirable, hardly ever enters into the choice which they make of the way wherein they walk their whole lifetime. They are diligent in finding out every thing elſe, and take care

not to be deceived in the minuteſt things. Their whole time is taken up with their equipage, and in procuring conveniencies for their journey: but as to the way, they chooſe it with ſo little diſcretion, that there is nothing in the world that they are leſs anxious about. Should one aſk mankind in general, where they are going, they will unanimouſly anſwer, that they are going towards death, and to eternity; that every ſtep hurries them on; and, that they know not but every ſtep they take may be their laſt, and bring them to this term; for, in all the ways that mankind follow, nobody knows whether he be near to, or far from his end. But, ſhould one immediately after aſk them, why they rather chooſe this way than any other, and upon what foundation they build the maxims by which they are guided? One will find as ſoon as we reflect upon it, that they have followed the firſt lights that ſtruck them; that the rules, by which they are guided, have no other foundation than a cuſtom that they have embraced without ever examining into it, or raſh diſcourſes that they have formed into principles; or, in fine their paſſions and their caprice. We comprehend very well in what manner we are carried away by example, and by the diſcourſes of other people; but we do not ſo well underſtand which way we form maxims for our own conduct upon our own paſſions; and,

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indeed, this effect is inſenſible, but behold in what manner it happens.

Men would ceaſe to be men, were they not to follow ſome ſort of light, either true or falſe. Their nature is ſo formed, that their will embraces nothing but what is repreſented by the mind under the colour of ſome good. Therefore, in ſome reſpect they are obliged to follow the conduct of reaſon; and, though pleaſure ſometimes leads them to do things that reaſon judges bad and pernicious, yet this can neither happen always, nor very often. The combat of the paſſions, againſt reaſon, is too inconvenient, the paſſions cannot withſtand it, and, to make life ſupportable, one muſt neceſſarily find out ſome means of according the paſſions with reaſon. It is a hard thing to be deſpiſed and condemned by others; but it is much more ſo to be deſpiſed and condemned by ourſelves; becauſe nobody loves us better than we do ourſelves, and we covet the eſteem and approbation of nobody more than we do of ourſelves. Therefore it is neceſſary for mankind, as they deſire to be eſteemed by themſelves, to range themſelves under the conduct of their reaſon, to avoid its reproaches: but, becauſe they would likewiſe content their paſſions, they make, in ſome ſort, their reaſon, by becoming flexible to their inclinations, to form maxims of conduct that are conformable to them, and according to which it may approve

their actions. Thus they eſtabliſh a harmony between themſelves by this mutual correſpondence of their actions, and of their thoughts. They think as they act, and they act as they think; and they do not condemn one another, becauſe their will always follows what the underſtanding dictates to it, and the underſtanding preſcribes what their will deſires. Wherefore this thought of *Seneca*, that all fools are diſſatisfied with themſelves, which is very true in one ſenſe, is extremely falſe in another; and one may ſay, on the contrary, with much more truth, that it is the property of wiſe men to be diſſatisfied with themſelves; becauſe their actions never perfectly correſpond to their underſtanding. But fools, on the contrary, are for the moſt part very well pleaſed, and contented with what they do; becauſe their reaſon and their conduct agree, and this we are likewiſe taught, in the holy ſcripture, when it ſays, *that the fool is full of his own ways*; that is to ſay, that he is contented and ſatisfied with them. Therefore, as there is, as it were, a neceſſary connection between the conduct of man, and the underſtanding of man, it follows, that there are as many different underſtandings as there are humours and different conducts; and this may be eaſily remarked, if we conſider intimately the life and actions of mankind. For we need only to conſider them a little to be convinced, that every body has his own principles,

ciples, and his own maxims, of which he forms morals according to his own fancy.

Theſe maxims, and theſe principles of morality, are the rules which they adopt in the choice that they make of the way that leads to eternal life, or to eternal death; for the ſeries of actions of every particular perſon, conſtitutes the way in which he walks during his life-time, and his actions are regulated by the principles according to which he conducts himſelf: ſo that, as there are infinite bad ways, that is to ſay, ways that are irregular and unreaſonable, there muſt likewiſe be infinite falſemorals. Thus, there is not only a morality among Chriſtians, a morality among *Jews*, among *Turks*, among *Perſians*, *Brachmans*, *Chineſe*, *Braſilians*, that conſiſts of certain maxims that are common to each of theſe ſocieties, but, likewiſe, among thoſe that profeſs the ſame religion, there are often different morals, according to the different profeſſions of life. Magiſtrates have certain maxims, gentlemen have others; ſoldiers have their morals, the merchants theirs; the artiſans, partiſans, nay, and even robbers, banditti and corſairs, are not without their morals: for theſe men have certain rules that they obſerve, among themſelves, as faithfully as other men do their laws; and they make a conſcience, as well as the reſt of mankind, that approves their way of life. In fine, by deſcending to every man in particular, we ſhall find, that, beſides ſome general

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maxims, in which they agree with thoſe of their own religion and profeſſion, they have, likewiſe, ſeveral particular maxims that they pick up here and there, or which they form of themſelves, whereof they compound a morality quite different from that of other men.

It is a ſurprizing thing, to conſider the confuſed mixture of maxims, of which the morals of private perſons are made up; for, in their maxims, we ſee no leſs variety than in the countenances of mankind that are ſo admirably diverſified. But what is moſt aſtoniſhing, and what makes us diſtinguiſh better than any thing elſe, the exceſs of human blindneſs, is the prodigious levity and indifference with which they embrace the moſt important maxims of their conduct, the little care that they take to diſtinguiſh truth from error, and the obſtinacy with which they attach themſelves to error, as if they were the moſt infallible in the world. Their all lies at ſtake; for it is an affair of no leſs importance than an eternity of happineſs or of miſery; every ſtep that urges them towards death, brings them nearer to one of theſe eternities. Ought not then their principal care, their chief application be, to inſtruct themſelves in the true rules that they muſt follow, in the conduct of their whole life, and to endeavour to diſtinguiſh them from that innumerable number of falſe rules that are followed by thoſe that fly from truth? Even the diverſity of maxims that reign among mankind,

kind, ought to make them comprehend that it is not ſuch an eaſy thing to find the way that leads to eternal life; for men are not agreed which it is: yet it is the leaſt of their concern, to inſtruct themſelves after what manner they ought to live. They embrace, for the moſt part, without ever weighing matters, the firſt maxims that are given them, and never call in queſtion thoſe that they adopt, as if it were certain the firſt inſtructions were always true. This is particularly to be remarked in religion, which is the moſt important affair in the world, and what, in all people, makes a very conſiderable part of their morals; for there is no raſhneſs to come up to that which carries the greateſt part of mankind to follow one religion rather than another: the Chriſtian religion I except, that has ſuch a great luſtre, that is ſo diſtinguiſhed for its holineſs, for its antiquity, for its miracles, for its propheſies, that thoſe that profeſs it, being ſtruck with its extraordinary ſplendor, which is to be found no where elſe, muſt not be deemed raſh, in preferring it, without heſitating, to all others whatever. Beſides, it has this advantage, that the more we penetrate into its depths, the more light we diſcover; whereas other religions will not bear the leaſt examining. I ſpeak, therefore, only of thoſe other religions that reign in the greateſt part of the world, and which, taken together, are infinitely more extended than chriſtianity. There is nothing

more extravagant than all theſe beliefs; and if on purpoſe, one would ſtudy ridiculous opinions, founded upon no reaſon, and without appearance, one could not ſucceed better than the authors of theſe fantaſtical religions have done. Theſe religions have neither miracles nor propheſies, nor any thing elſe capable of convincing minds endowed with the leaſt ſpark of reaſon: all that we learn by reaſoning, by experience, by reading hiſtories, overthrows them, and evinces their falſhood. Whence comes it then, that they are followed by three quarters of the world, that mahometiſm alone occupies ſuch a vaſt tract of earth? Should one aſk the *Brachmans*, the *Chineſe*, the *Tartars*, the *Turks*, why they follow their religion? If they have the leaſt ſincerity, they will anſwer nothing elſe, but that they follow it, becauſe their parents, their friends, their country, their prince, follow it. Behold the whole foundation of their belief; there needs nothing but a little common ſenſe, to ſhew that this reaſon is ridiculous; for all religions would be true, according to this rule, in the country where they are profeſſed. But however abſurd this reaſon may be, yet the generality of mankind are not capable to withſtand its force, their minds ſubmit to it, they yield to it without reſiſtance, and build upon it the foundation of their whole life.

None but the Chriſtians, as I have ſaid, can be lawfully exempted from this imprudence

dence, though perhaps there may be ſeveral among them too that are Chriſtians only in the ſame manner as *Turks* are *Turks*, that is to ſay, by the impreſſion only of example, without any divine attachment in their hearts, and without any ſolid light in their underſtandings. But, as it is true in general, that the morals of all Chriſtians are very ſolid in the principles which they draw from this ſacred religion; it is likewiſe true, that they are very mean, and of little ſolidity in the minds of the greateſt part of thoſe that bear the name of Chriſtians, becauſe they are ſo little inſtructed in the fundamentals of their religion, and they take the liberty to form to themſelves other maxims, according to their own caprice. The principles that they draw from the Chriſtian religion, make but a very little part of their morals; they have infinite other principles that they have embraced by chance, and without examining into them, with the ſame raſhneſs that we remarked in thoſe other blind people: the example of their friends, and of thoſe with whom they live, the diſcourſes of thoſe with whom they converſe, imprint in their minds a great number of other principles, withont their being aware of it. The love of themſelves, and the ſecret deſire they have of juſtifying themſelves in their paſſions, inſpire them with many, as we ſaid before. They form many judgments at random, upon things that happen, and theſe judgments remaining in their memory, and, being favoured by ſelf-

love, which regards them as her own productions, ſerve for principles on other ſimilar occaſions: and thus they form morals, full as irregular as thoſe of the *Mahometans* and *Indians*. In all other reſpects, they think they ſtand in need of a tutor, and of inſtructions; they ſtudy other things with ſome pains; they are docile, with reſpect to their teachers. In a word, there is only the ſcience of living, which they either do not learn at all, and do not deſire to learn, or they learn it with ſo little attention, that it ſeems as if it did not merit their application. They are very careful in chooſing artiſans, doctors, lawyers; they are afraid to be cheated in every little trifle; but they have no manner of miſtruſt when no leſs an affair is in hand, than that of eternal ſalvation or damnation. Any guide ſeems capable of inſtructing them; the firſt that comes is approved of, and they content themſelves with him in full ſecurity. Thus they boldly enter upon the journey of life, without ſeeking after any other lights than thoſe that reſult from theſe fantaſtical maxims, with which they have raſhly filled their imagination. Where are thoſe that are ſeriouſly touched with the fear of going aſtray, and of taking a bad road in their life, that deſire nothing more than to find the true light that may lead them to it, and that make this enquiry their principal, and their moſt ſerious occupation? Where are they that inſtruct themſelves, that walk with fear and trem-

trembling, that keep a continual watch where they tread? Without doubt there are ſome; becauſe ſome are juſt and ſome elected: but their number is very ſmall, becauſe there are few juſt, and few elected. The greateſt part of mankind walk without fear, without miſtruſt, without foreſeeing, without reflection; and raſhly following their paſſions and their fancies they haſtily advance towards death, till they arrive at this dreadful moment which ſhows mankind what they would not ſee during their life time, but makes them ſee it in vain, by drawing from the bottom of their heart theſe words full of deſpair: therefore we have ſtrayed from the way of truth, the light of juſtice hath not ſhined upon us, and the ſun of underſtanding has not riſen for us.

Conſidering with terror theſe raſh and vagabond ſteps of the greateſt part of mankind which lead them to death, to an eternal death, I imagine to myſelf to ſee a frightful iſland, environed with ſharp precipices and covered over with a gloomy black cloud, which deprives me of a diſtinct view of it, ſurrounded with a torrent of fire that receives all thoſe that fall from the top of the precipices of this iſland. All the ways, and all the paths terminate at theſe precipices except one, that is very narrow and very hard to be diſtinguiſhed, that ends in a point, by which they avoid the torrent of fire, and arrive at a place of ſafety and of light. In this iſland are an infinite num-

number of inhabitants that are commanded to walk continually: an impetuous wind preſſes them forwards and does not permit them to ſtop. They are only told that all the ways end in a precipice, that there is but one way by which they can ſave themſelves, and that this way is very hard to be known. But notwithſtanding theſe admonitions, theſe miſerable wretches, without informing themſelves of this happy path, ſet out on their journey, they are taken up with nothing but the care of their equipage, with the deſire of commanding their companions in this unhappy journey, and in enquiring what diverſions they can take by the way. Thus they inſenſibly arrive at the brink of the precipice, where they are whirled into the torrent of fire that ſwallows them up for ever. There is only a ſmall number of wiſe men that ſeek with care this narrow path, and having diſcovered it walk therein with great circumſpection, and thus finding means to paſs the torrent, and to come out of theſe precipices, arrive, in fine, at a place of ſafety and reſt.

Perhaps he that ſaid to God theſe words; My ſoul hath paſſed the torrent, perhaps it would have paſſed an intolerable torrent, had in his mind ſome image of this kind: but however frightful it may appear, it is far ſhort of the truth of what I intended to repreſent. Spiritual things are ſo high, that no imagination can reach them; all imagination is in-

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finitely below the reality of their greatneſs: there is no proportion between this torrent of fire that receives thoſe that fall from the precipice of this imaginary iſland, and hell that really receives thoſe that come out of the world by death, after they have ſtrayed from the path of truth. Yet this image, as imperfect as it is, is ſufficient to make us comprehend that the only true wiſdom of theſe travellers, is to find the way by which they may ſave their lives, and to walk in it ſteadily to the end; and that all thoſe that do not trouble themſelves to ſeek for it are mad and unfortunate. It is ſufficient to make us conceive that all the curioſity that they may have for other things, all the ambition that they may have to govern their companions, all the eagerneſs that they may have in the purſuit of their pleaſures are not only vain and ridiculous, but likewiſe can be nothing but the effect of an incredible ſtupidity. What then ought we to ſay of the truth of which this image is ſo deficient? And what muſt we think of the blindneſs of thoſe who take ſo little care to inſtruct themſelves concerning the way of their ſalvation, that live and walk at random, and that think of nothing but diverting themſelves during the journey to eternity.

It is to rouſe men out of this lethargy of brutal raſhneſs by which they precipitate themſelves into hell, by following their own humours and fancies, that God exhorts them with

with ſo much earneſtneſs in the ſcripture to liſten unto wiſdom, and to open the ears of their underſtanding to hear it. It is for this reaſon that he exhorts them to ſeek it as miſers ſeek gold and the hidden treaſures of the earth; and that he would have him to regard it as their eſtate, their inheritance and their treaſure. For this wiſdom that he bids them to ſeek, is nothing elſe but the light that is neceſſary for them to walk by, in the darkneſs of this life, and to regulate their actions according to the truth and the law of God: and it conſiſts entirely in knowing the way that one muſt keep to go to heaven. Wherefore it is ſaid expreſſly that the wiſdom of him that is truly delicate, is to know his way; and the ſcripture calls it the ſcience of ſalvation, becauſe it is the only ſcience capable of guiding us to ſalvation, and all other ſciences, without, it are nothing but ſciences of death.

Behold the true ſcience of men, *viz.* to know their way, that is to ſay, the way f ſalvation, the way of peace, the way of heaven. Their happineſs conſiſts in acquiring this ſcience; but the means of acquiring it is to eſteem it as much as it deſerves. And therefore the ſcripture ſays to us again, "That the "beginning of wiſdom is to make a treaſure "of it, and to prefer it before all the riches "of the world." For it is the will of God that this ſcience, ſo neceſſary to mankind, ſhould depend

depend more on their heart than on their underſtanding; and that, as it is not found by thoſe that do not deſire it at all, or do not deſire it according to its merit, thoſe only ſhould find it, that ſeek it with all their heart.

Therefore the great ſtep towards wiſdom is to deſire it, and to ſeek it ſincerely, and to be in a lively manner penetrated with the dreadful unhappineſs of living at random, of following raſhly the opinions that one has received without weighing them, which the ſcripture calls, walking after one's thoughts, and doing the will of one's thoughts; of not knowing where one goes, and of not caring whether the way which we follow leads to life or to death.

My deſign in this diſcourſe was only to attack this monſtrous ſtupidity, and to convince, if I could, thoſe that read it, and have not as yet ſufficiently reflected upon their conduct, that it is a horrible blindneſs to be taken up with every thing in the world, and to fill their mind with things as they do; to learn arts, exerciſes, ſciences, and not at all to learn the ſcience of living, that is to ſay, the ſcience of living in ſuch a manner as is neceſſary to avoid the eternity of miſeries, with which we are threatened, and to arrive at eternal happineſs, which will be the reward of the juſt. For when this thought is ſtrongly ingrafted in our minds, and in our hearts, and becomes

our predominant paſſion, it not only puts us in the way of finding truth, applies us to ſeek for it, opens our eyes to diſcover it; but it is more capable than any thing elſe to diſſipate the principal illuſion that hides it from us, which is that duplicity of heart ſo often mentioned in the ſcripture, that makes us afraid of knowing our duty, leſt the obligation that we are under of accompliſhing it ſhould urge us too much when it is once known to us, and we ſhould be obliged to renounce our paſſions, or to follow them only with a troubleſome remorſe that diſturbs our reſt and our pleaſure.

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